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301023Z Aug 00

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ACTION AF-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AMAD-00 ACQ-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00  
DS-00 EUR-00 VC-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 VCE-00 NSAE-00  
PM-00 P-00 SP-00 STR-00 PMB-00 DSAC-00 DRL-02  
NFAT-00 SAS-00 /002W

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6967  
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 004818

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF, AF/S, AF/EPS, EB/IFD/ODF, EB/TPP/ODC  
TREASURY FOR ED BARBER, GRACE SONE, AND HOFFMAN BARAK  
USDOC FOR 2037/ERIC HENDERSON  
STATE PASS USTR/RWHITTAKER  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR GAYLE SMITH  
LONDON FOR CHARLES GURNEY  
PARIS FOR BISA WILLIAMS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/28/05

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM ZI

SUBJECT: COMMERCIAL FARMERS: A PLEA FOR INTERNATIONAL  
PRESSURE ON MUGABE

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REF: A) HARARE 4695 B) HARARE 4662

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR McDONALD, REASONS: 1.5 (B) AND  
(D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) THREE COMMERCIAL FARMERS, ACCCOMPANIED BY THEIR  
LEGAL COUNSEL AND AN MDC MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, TOLD  
AMBASSADOR McDONALD ON AUGUST 28 THAT PHYSICAL  
INTIMIDATION OF FARMERS HAD MOSTLY STOPPED. NOW, THE  
GOVERNMENT WAS ENCOURAGING SQUATTERS TO BUILD HOUSES ON  
OCCUPIED LAND. THEY EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE SITUATION  
ON MANY FARMS IN THE MASVINGO AREA WAS DETERIORATING, AND  
THAT WIDESPREAD POACHING BY WAR VETERANS WAS OCCURRING IN  
GAME RESERVES. THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION PLANNED TO  
REFILE ITS CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE OF THE LAND  
ACQUISITION ACT, REVERSING ITS EARLIER WITHDRAWAL OF THE  
CASE, BECAUSE THE GOZ WAS NOT NEGOTIATING IN GOOD FAITH.  
THE GROUP URGED THE UNITED STATES TO ENCOURAGE PRESIDENT  
MBEKI TO WEIGH IN FORCEFULLY WITH PRESIDENT MUGABE, AND  
SUGGESTED THAT SOUTH AFRICA'S THREATENING A TOTAL CUTOFF  
OF FUEL AND ELECTRICITY COULD CONVINCE THE ZIMBABWEAN  
PRESIDENT TO CHANGE COURSE. THIS GROUP OF FARMERS HAS  
CONCLUDED THAT FURTHER DIALOGUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT WILL  
LEAD NOWHERE AND IS CONVINCED THAT ONLY INTERNATIONAL  
PRESSURE ON MUGABE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE. WE BELIEVE IT  
MIGHT BE TIME TO CONSIDER ENCOURAGING MBEKI AGAIN TO  
WEIGH IN WITH THE ZIMBABWEAN PRESIDENT, A COURSE OF

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ACTION ON WHICH WE WOULD WELCOME EMBASSY PRETORIA'S AND  
DEPARTMENT'S THINKING. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) BOB HENSON, WHO OWNS A TOBACCO FARM NEAR DOMA,  
SEVERAL HUNDRED KILOMETERS NORTHEAST OF HARARE, CALLED ON  
AMBASSADOR McDONALD ON AUGUST 28 TO BRIEF HIM ON CURRENT  
LAND-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS. HE WAS ACCCOMPANIED BY MIKE  
AURET, A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FROM THE OPPOSITION  
MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC), ATTORNEY JEREMY  
CALLOW, AND TWO COMMERCIAL FARMERS, JOHN TOPPING AND  
PETER FORSYTHE. THE AMBASSADOR WAS JOINED BY POLOFF.

CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

¶3. (C) JOHN TOPPING, WHO OWNS A FARM 75 KM NORTH OF THE  
CAPITAL NEAR BINDURA, REPORTED THAT MOST OF THE PHYSICAL  
AGGRESSION AGAINST FARMERS IN HIS AREA HAD STOPPED. THE  
GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE NOW APPEARED TO BE TO MOVE  
PEOPLE ONTO LAND AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO BUILD HOUSES.

SQUATTERS IN SOME AREAS WERE ARRIVING WITH CORRUGATED IRON AND OTHERS WITH PRE-FAB HOUSING, TRANSPORTED THERE BY GOVERNMENT VEHICLES. HE CLAIMED THAT SOME OF THE SO-CALLED WAR VETERANS WERE NOT INTERESTED IN LAND AND WOULD DRIFT AWAY IF NOT CLOSELY SUPERVISED BY THOSE WHO HAD BROUGHT THEM. FARMERS ARE NOW GENERALLY REFUSING ALL REQUESTS FROM WAR VETERANS FOR FOOD, MONEY, OR ANY OTHER KINDS OF ASSISTANCE. IN FACT, MANY HAVE DETERMINED NOT TO SPEAK TO THE WAR VETERANS.

14. (C) FORSYTHE, WHOSE FARM IS LOCATED SOME 40 KM EAST  
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OF HARARE NEAR ARCTURUS, SAID THE WAR VETERANS IN HIS AREA HAD ATTEMPTED TO FORCE A WORK STOPPAGE THE PREVIOUS WEEK. (NOTE: THE ARCTURUS AREA HAS BEEN A HOTBED OF PROBLEMS SINCE THE FARM INVASIONS BEGAN. END NOTE.) FARM WORKERS, HOWEVER, HAD REFUSED TO BE INTIMIDATED, AND PLANTING WAS CURRENTLY PROCEEDING. HE SAID THE SITUATION WAS DETERIORATING IN MASVINGO PROVINCE, IN SOUTH-CENTRAL ZIMBABWE, WHERE WAR VETERANS WERE DOING SERIOUS DAMAGE ON MANY FARMS. MP AURET ADDED THAT A GREAT DEAL OF DESTRUCTION IS OCCURRING IN GAME RESERVES, WHERE POACHING, AIDED BY GOVERNMENT VEHICLES, IS OUT OF CONTROL. STONE RIDGE FARM, ONE OF THOSE FROM WHICH SQUATTERS WERE RECENTLY EVICTED, HAS BEEN REOCCUPIED AND THE OWNER HAS RECEIVED DEATH THREATS.

15. (C) THE AMBASSADOR ASKED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE APPARENT EXPULSION OF CHENJERAI HUNZVI AS CHAIRMAN OF THE WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION. AURET SAID THE ACTION HAD BEEN PRECIPITATED BY WAR VETERANS ANGERED BY HUNZVI'S DICTATORIAL LEADERSHIP AND HIS ALLEGED MISAPPROPRIATION OF FUNDS AT ZEXCOM, A COMPANY OWNED AND OPERATED BY WAR VETERANS. AURET SAID THE ISSUE WAS FAR FROM OVER,

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P 301023Z AUG 00  
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6968  
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 HARARE 004818

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HOWEVER, AS HUNZVI WAS CHALLENGING THE ACTION AND PRESIDENT MUGABE COULD REINSTATE HUNZVI ANY TIME HE CHOSE.

CFU'S LEGAL CHALLENGE

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16. (C) THE AMBASSADOR RECALLED THAT THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION (CFU) HAD RECENTLY WITHDRAWN ITS LEGAL CHALLENGE OF AMENDMENTS MADE TO THE LAND ACQUISITION ACT. HAD THE WITHDRAWAL CAUSED A SPLIT WITHIN THE CFU? NO, BOB HENSON REPLIED, MEMBERS OF THE CFU HAD RESOLVED THEIR DIFFERENCES OVER THIS ISSUE AND REMAINED UNITED. JEREMY CALLOW SAID THE CFU PLANNED IN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO TO RESUBMIT ITS CASE CHALLENGING THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE AMENDMENTS TO THE LAND ACQUISITION ACT, THE LEGAL BASIS FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S FAST TRACK RESETTLEMENT EFFORT. THE CASE HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN SEVERAL WEEKS EARLIER, CALLOW SAID, IN AN EFFORT TO PRESERVE A CHANNEL

OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE GOZ. (NOTE: CALLOW IS A PROMINENT LOCAL LAWYER WHO REPRESENTED THE THREE AMERICANS DETAINED HERE LAST YEAR ON WEAPONS CHARGES. END NOTE.)

¶17. (C) ACCORDING TO CALLOW, IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE GOZ IS NOT COMMUNICATING WITH THE CFU IN GOOD FAITH. THE GOVERNMENT PAYS LIP SERVICE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE, WHILE CONTINUING TO PERMIT LAND INVASIONS, AND ANNOUNCING THAT IT WILL COMPENSATE SQUATTERS FOR PROPERTY DAMAGED IN POLICE EVICTIONS THE WEEK OF AUGUST 21.

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¶18. (C) CALLOW HOPED THE COURTS WOULD ISSUE AN INJUNCTION STOPPING THE CURRENT LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM. ASSUMING THE COURT RULED IN THE CFU'S FAVOR, THE AMBASSADOR ASKED, DID CALLOW BELIEVE THE GOZ WOULD COMPLY? PROBABLY NOT, CALLOW RESPONDED, BUT IT WAS CRUCIAL FOR HIS CLIENTS TO MAKE THEIR RECORD AND FOR THE FARMERS' OWN CREDIBILITY WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY THAT THEY PURSUE EVERY POSSIBLE AVENUE OPEN TO THEM.

FUEL AND ELECTRICITY CRUCIAL LEVERS WITH MUGABE

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¶19. (C) AURET SAID ZIMBABWE WAS "ON ITS BACKSIDE" AND WAS ABLE TO STAGGER ALONG PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S PROVISION OF FUEL AND ELECTRICITY. TOPPING ADDED THAT THE THREAT OF A TOTAL CUTOFF OF LIGHTS AND FUEL WAS PERHAPS THE ONLY EFFECTIVE TOOL LEFT THAT MIGHT TURN MUGABE AROUND. THE TURMOIL IN ZIMBABWE WAS AFFECTING THE ENTIRE REGION, AND HE HOPED THE UNITED STATES COULD ENCOURAGE SOUTH AFRICA TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON MUGABE. HE AND THE OTHERS IN THE ROOM, TOPPING SAID, WERE TRYING NOT ONLY TO SAVE THEIR OWN LAND, BUT TO DO ALL THEY COULD TO PREVENT THEIR COUNTRY FROM "GOING DOWN THE TUBES."

¶10. (C) THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS THE GOZ AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS TO RESTORE THE RULE OF LAW AND TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO PUT THE ECONOMY BACK ON TRACK. OUR LEVERAGE IS LIMITED, HOWEVER, AS WE PROVIDE NO DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO THE GOVERNMENT. WE WOULD

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CONTINUE TO DO ALL WE COULD TO NUDGE MUGABE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, BUT SOUTH AFRICA IS THE KEY PLAYER HERE. THE UNITED STATES IS IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH PRESIDENT MBEKI ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN ZIMBABWE AND HAS URGED HIM TO WEIGH IN WITH MUGABE. MBEKI HAS BEEN HELPFUL, BUT HE HAS TO BE CAREFUL. IF HE PUSHES TOO HARD, MUGABE IS CAPABLE OF WITHDRAWING INTO A SHELL AND GOING IT ALONE.

COMMENT

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¶11. (C) THERE WAS A TONE OF DESPERATION AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP. THEY REFLECT WIDESPREAD CONCERN ABOUT THE SEVERE DAMAGE THE GOVERNMENT'S HAPHAZARD RESETTLEMENT EFFORT IS DOING TO FARMERS' LIVELIHOODS, TO AGRICULTURE, AND TO THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE. THEY HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE THAT ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE, AND HAVE CONCLUDED THAT ONLY PRESSURE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CAN FORCE MUGABE TO CHANGE COURSE. THE GROUP'S SUGGESTION THAT WE ENCOURAGE MBEKI AGAIN TO WEIGH IN WITH MUGABE MERITS SERIOUS CONSIDERATION, AND WE WOULD WELCOME

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DEPARTMENT'S AND EMBASSY PRETORIA'S THINKING ON THIS  
ISSUE.

¶12. (C) DESPITE THIS GROUP'S CONTENTION THAT THE  
SITUATION ON COMMERCIAL FARMS IS GETTING WORSE, THE REAL  
PICTURE IS ACTUALLY UNCLEAR. THERE HAVE BEEN FEW NEW  
FARM INVASIONS DURING THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, ACCORDING TO  
THE CFU, BUT NEITHER HAVE THERE BEEN ANY FURTHER POLICE  
EVICTIONS OF WAR VETERANS SUBSEQUENT TO THOSE REPORTED IN  
REF B. IN AN ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT, POLICE IN MOST  
PROVINCES ARE NOW RESPONDING WHEN SQUATTERS ENGAGE IN  
CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS INTERFERING WITH FARMING  
OPERATIONS, ASSAULTING FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS, STEALING  
PROPERTY, AND CUTTING DOWN TREES.

¶13. (C) THE QUESTION NOW, OF COURSE, IS HOW THE  
GOVERNMENT PLANS TO PROCEED. AS INDICATED IN PREVIOUS  
REPORTING, VICE-PRESIDENT MSIKA, HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER  
JOHN NKOMO, AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US  
RECENTLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO MOVE SQUATTERS OFF  
NON-DESIGNATED FARMS TO THOSE IDENTIFIED FOR COMPULSORY  
ACQUISITION. PRESIDENT MUGABE, HOWEVER, IS CLEARLY  
UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THAT COURSE OF ACTION, AND WE HAVE NOT  
YET SEEN ANY MOVEMENT IN THAT DIRECTION. EFFORTS BY THE  
GOZ TO ADDRESS THE LAND REFORM ISSUE IN A FAIR AND  
TRANSPARENT WAY HAVE OCCURRED ONLY WHEN MUGABE IS OUT OF  
THE COUNTRY AND HAVE BEEN REVERSED UPON HIS RETURN. THE  
EVICTIONS, FOR INSTANCE, WERE CARRIED OUT LAST WEEK WHILE  
MUGABE WAS IN MOZAMBIQUE, BUT STOPPED WHEN HE CAME BACK.  
THE RESULTING GOZ POLICY ON LAND IS CYCLICAL AND

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HAPHAZARD, IN WHICH IT REGULARLY TAKES ONE STEP FORWARD,  
THEN TWO STEPS BACK. WE NOTE THAT PRESIDENT MUGABE WILL  
BE IN NEW YORK THIS WEEK FOR THE MILLENIUM SUMMIT. HIS  
ABSENCE COULD PROVIDE AN OPENING, ALTHOUGH CERTAINLY A  
TEMPORARY ONE, FOR SOME POSITIVE MOVEMENT ON LAND.

MCDONALD

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